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Dear Members

I wrote and submitted the editorial below to 30+ daily newspapers throughout Massachusetts late last week. To date, it has run in the publications listed at right. Please consider sending a note, such as the sample below the editorial to the editor listed if you live in a town that paper covers. Together, we can make a difference.

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by Joe Dorant
Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers & Scientists



Every

year it is the same thing, the Governor and Legislature begin the budget dialog with ominous warnings to citizens that we are in for more gut-wrenching times. Budget analysts are already projecting a \$1 billion revenue shortfall for fiscal year 2013, so the proverbial writing on the wall is not pretty.

Budgets need balancing and citizens get this. The Governor and Legislature have faced a monumental task in balancing the budget during an economic recession that has hurt so many families in this Commonwealth. However, this relentless chipping away at resources designed to maintain the public's health and safety must come to an end.

These days, deferral of difficult choices is commonplace, but avoiding or extending these tough actions is only more costly in the end. Clean air and energy, safe drinking water, protection from communicable diseases, well maintained bridges and safe roads, proper crime scene analysis, secure dams, safeguarding of our farmlands and fisheries and protecting the environment and its wildlife are all important and necessary services supported by taxpayer dollars and, coincidentally, supported by most taxpayers. Yet, when budgets need cutting, these are the very areas that continue to take the hardest hits.

This chronic under funding of state services has resulted in serious risks to every citizen and the environment that we live in. Lack of even just adequate support to key community programs results in agencies unable to fulfill their core missions. These deep and devastating cuts impacting the citizens of Massachusetts include:

- * The Department of Environmental Protection has seen staffing drop from 1215 to 840 employees and suffered over \$60 million in cuts to our Legislature's very own mandated environmental programs;
- * The Department of Public Health analyzes more than 24,000 drug samples annually - a key to keeping drug dealers off our streets - with just 16 scientists; the turnaround time for current case analysis is over 6 months, costing taxpayers additional money in court and attorney's fees;
- * a proposed cut to the Department of Labor Standards of \$800,000 threatens workplace safety laws and a new lead safety rule training program designed to protect children from lead poisoning;
- * The State Police Crime Lab currently has a backlog of over 2,000 untested DNA samples; a major source of underfunding;
- * an estimated \$15-19 billion gap in transportation funding to bring the existing surface transportation system to a state of "good" repair continues to haunt the Commonwealth.

Together, we must face the reality that despite years of budget cuts, public employee layoffs and many reforms, it is simply not enough to support the most basic of budget priorities that protect the environment, monitor public health issues and fix our deteriorating roadways and bridges.

One practical solution for the Commonwealth would be to recognize that we must pass major revenue reform legislation for fiscal year 2013.

Now is time to stop kicking the can down the road and to realign Massachusetts' budget to support fundamental priorities that maintain, first and foremost, the health and safety of the public.

Joe Dorant is president of the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers & Scientists - representing 39 different Massachusetts agencies - a group of 3,400 professionals working each day to keep the Commonwealth's citizens, their air, water and food supplies, the energy they depend on, the environment that they live and recreate in and the infrastructure that they travel on safe.

If you live in one of the towns covered by the papers listed at right, please consider sending the editor a quick email saying:

Dear Editor,

I am a member of the Massachusetts Organization of State Engineers & Scientists and live in [INSERT YOUR TOWN]. I agree with Joe Dorant's editorial and hope our Legislature considers real and viable budget reform for FY2013.

Yours.

FULL NAME
ADDRESS
PHONE

The editor's email is listed under each paper's link to the editorial. Thank you in advance for responding to your local paper.

Joe Dorant
President
MOSES
90 North Washington Street
Boston, Massachusetts 02114

Salem Evening News
nbenton@salemnews

New Bedford Standard Times
runyon@s-t.com

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letters@sentinelandenterprise.com

Dedham Daily Transcript
asalishbury@wickedlocal.com

Millford Daily News
mdnletters@cnc.com

MetroWest Daily News
rholmes@cnc.com

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